news release

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HALL BLASTS STATEMENT OF EAST TIMOR GOVERNOR ON ANNIVERSARY OF SANTA CRUZ MASSACRE

Rep. Tony P. Hall (D-OH) lashed out at the newly-appointed governor of the troubled territory of East Timor, who has stated that Indonesian troops should have killed more people at a funeral commemoration a year ago.

Eyewitnesses affirm that Indonesian troops killed dozens of people, perhaps more than 200, when they fired into a crowd of mourners at a church cemetery a year ago. According to a report from Reuters published in the New York Times on November 6, 1992, the Indonesian-appointed governor of East Timor, Abilio Soares, is quoted as saying, "In my opinion, there should have been more people killed. Why did only that number die? Why not all one thousand?"

"Such a statement is totally outrageous, let alone the sentiments that must lie behind it," said Hall, who led a successful Congressional effort that ended in October with the suspension of $2.3 million in American military training for the Indonesian Armed Forces for FY 1993. That marked the first time that the Congress cut aid to Indonesia over the East Timor situation.

Indonesia invaded East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, in December, 1975, and has ruled it by force since that time, in defiance of United Nations resolutions. International human rights groups have continued to report widespread abuses by Indonesian military forces against the Timorese.

"Indonesian officials have shown precious little real regret over the massacre" that took place last November 12 at Santa Cruz cemetery in East Timor, Hall said. "The fact that statements such as that of Governor Soares continue to be issued underscores this. But, Jakarta should realize that the U.S. Congress, and the international community, will continue to take action until there is a just settlement to this tragedy."

More than 100,000 East Timorese of a population of less than 700,000 have died in the fighting, famine, disease and executions that followed the Indonesian invasion. This longtime pattern of brutality was brought to world attention on November 12, 1991, when Indonesian military forces opened fire on unarmed Timorese civilians at Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the capital of East Timor. The incident was captured on film by a British cameraman from Yorkshire Television. Two visiting American journalists were badly beaten by Indonesian troops during the November 12 events.

Hall has been the leading Congressional proponent for the cause of East Timor since coming to Congress in 1979.

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